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Summary record of the 10th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 11 October 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Maitland ..... (South Africa)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 74: Effects of atomic radiation (A/57/46, A/C.4/57/L.7)

1. **The Chairman** drew Committee members' attention to the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (A/57/46) and to draft resolution A/C.4/57/L.7.

2. **Mr. Cordeiro** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) and the associated countries Bolivia and Chile, said that the States members of MERCOSUR attached great importance to the work of the Scientific Committee and greatly appreciated the scientific evaluations contained in its reports. The States members of MERCOSUR and the associated countries strongly believed that atomic energy should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes in the interest of socio-economic development.

3. Introducing the report of the Scientific Committee, in his capacity as Chairman, he drew attention to the Scientific Committee's new programme of work adopted in 2001, and expressed satisfaction at the establishment of official collaboration between the Committee and scientists in Belarus and Ukraine.

4. Every year, new scientific data emerged on radiation from both natural and man-made sources. The task of collecting, monitoring and disseminating such information was thus becoming increasingly relevant. In that connection, the Scientific Committee's budget crisis gave cause for serious concern. Its budgetary resources for the 2002-2003 biennium were not sufficient to cover assistance to the Secretariat for the preparation of documents, the servicing of expert meetings or payment for consultancy services. In view of that situation and taking into account the Scientific Committee's mandate laid down in paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 56/50 of 10 December 2001, it was to be hoped that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) would be sensitive to that concern and give the Scientific Committee an opportunity to resume its normal activities in the near future.

5. Introducing draft resolution A/C.4/57/L.7, which, to a great extent, reiterated the previous year's resolution on that item, he drew attention to some additions. In particular, the preamble took note that some Member States had expressed interest in becoming members of the Committee and also noted with concern that, owing to insufficient resources, the Committee had been unable to hold a regular session in 2002. Two new paragraphs of the resolution reflected the Scientific Committee's need for adequate resources. One urged UNEP to strengthen the funding of the Scientific Committee so that the Committee could discharge the responsibilities and mandate entrusted to it; the other emphasized the need for holding regular sessions of the Scientific Committee on an annual basis.

6. In conclusion, he said that Austria, Singapore and Thailand wished to become sponsors of the draft resolution and expressed the hope that it would be adopted by consensus, as it had been in previous years.

7. **Mr. Lauridsen** (Denmark) speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey and in addition, the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Iceland, noted that the Scientific Committee, the principal international body in its field, played a pre-eminent role in radiation risk assessment worldwide and delivered state-of-the-art reports, which were widely used for drafting national and international standards to protect populations against the effects of atomic radiation.

8. The European Union fully supported the work programme of the Scientific Committee, particularly with regard to the studies on the effects of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and initiatives to examine the effects of radiation on the environment. The European Union welcomed the dissemination of information on the Scientific Committee's work over the Internet.

9. Expressing support for the Scientific Committee's plans for its future activities in the area of scientific review and assessment, he said that the European Union believed that the Scientific Committee's budget crisis should be resolved as quickly as possible; if it continued, it might affect the work of other international organizations.

10. The European Union fully supported the Scientific Committee, which, by virtue of its scientific authority, was making an essential and independent

contribution to evaluating the risks and effects of radiation.

11. **Mr. Suman** (India) said that, recognizing the importance and significance of the work of the Scientific Committee, his country, as in previous years, was a sponsor of the draft resolution on the item under consideration.

12. It was a matter of concern that, owing to budgetary difficulties, the Scientific Committee had been unable to meet in 2002 to carry out its programme of work endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/50. Its current budget was just half of what it had been in 1992-1993, and two thirds of its 1994-1995 budget. The quality of the professional and competent consultants recruited by the Committee must not be compromised.

13. New information had surfaced on DNA mutation in populations living in the Semipalatinsk area, where atomic weapons tests had been carried out in the 1950s, and in the children of recovery workers at Chernobyl. In its 2001 report, the Scientific Committee had concluded that there was no evidence of hereditary disease in populations exposed to radiation; however, molecular data now suggested the possibility of mutations at the DNA level which could lead to hereditary disease. It was important to analyse rapidly accumulating new data, which the Scientific Committee was eminently competent to do.

14. The new programme of the Scientific Committee envisaged a new "from-sources-to-effects" approach not only in continuing its assessment of the effects of the Chernobyl accident but also with respect to radon in homes and workplaces, radioecology, cellular and molecular studies of tissues and organs and diseases other than cancer. Those efforts were in keeping with a deeper understanding of biological processes acquired through the use of the modern tools of genomics and proteonics.

15. India recognized that the global exposure of populations from natural and medical sources continued to be considerably larger than that caused by the fall-out of weapons testing, even at its peak in the 1960s. The new information emerging from studies of background radiation in India and elsewhere should be analysed by the Scientific Committee on a regular basis.

16. India called upon UNEP to recognize the importance of the Scientific Committee's work and its relevance to the objectives of UNEP, and to support it, not only by providing the additional funds requested for 2003, but also by ensuring sufficient allocations for forthcoming years.

17. **Ms. Kulik** (Ukraine) said that Ukraine attached particular significance to the activities of the Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR), since they related to the study of the radiological effects of the Chernobyl accident. In that connection, her delegation commended the intention of UNSCEAR to continue its studies of the disaster's effects on the population's health as a priority for its work. Ukraine also noted with satisfaction the close collaboration on Chernobyl between the Committee and scientists from the three affected countries.

18. Ukraine welcomed the Scientific Committee's plans for radiation risk assessments. Her delegation also noted with concern that insufficient resources could hinder the work of that Committee. It was imperative that a constructive solution to the current situation be found. The delegation of Ukraine supported measures to ensure that UNSCEAR would be able to discharge its important mandate effectively.

19. Ukraine reiterated its interest in becoming a member of the Scientific Committee. In light of the specific sphere of UNSCEAR activities, its work would benefit from inviting countries with expertise in atomic radiation to contribute to its activities as members. Ukraine had a significant scientific capacity in radiological research and unique knowledge and considerable experience in dealing with the effects of radiation. Her delegation was convinced that Ukraine could make a valuable contribution to the work of the Scientific Committee as a member. In that regard, it would greatly appreciate the support of Member States in its efforts to become a member.

20. **Mr. Takahashi** (Japan) said that his country was sponsoring the resolution, convinced that the efforts of the Scientific Committee to collect, structure and disseminate radiological information were essential in a world that was increasingly reliant on nuclear technology. He hoped that the resolution would be adopted by consensus.

21. By establishing a special advisory board under the Government's Nuclear Safety Commission, Japan had shown that it attached the highest priority to the

safe use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Furthermore, Japan had been conducting a survey, with the full cooperation of the Government of Kazakhstan, to assess the effects of radiation on the health of the people in the Semipalatinsk region.

22. Japan appreciated the scientific contributions by UNSCEAR to enhance atomic radiation safety and shared the budgetary concerns that its Chairperson had voiced in her letter to the Executive Director of UNEP. Japan hoped that UNEP would duly consider the budget request that UNSCEAR had recently submitted to it to enable the Scientific Committee to continue to work effectively.

23. **Mr. Ivanou** (Belarus) said that research on the effects of atomic radiation remained an important issue on the international agenda. The activities of the Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation were an important source of information in that regard.

24. The Republic of Belarus supported continued UNSCEAR activities in strict observance of the mandate entrusted to it under the relevant General Assembly resolutions. Objectivity, impartiality and the widest possible consideration of the views of all interested parties should be the guiding principles of its work. His delegation noted with regret that UNSCEAR had been unable to hold its regular session in 2002, and felt that the Scientific Committee, working in the interest of all Member States, should be able to fully discharge its mandate.

25. The Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster had put Belarus in a particular position with regard to the issues that fell within the remit of UNSCEAR. His country had acquired significant and unique expertise and experience regarding the effects of atomic radiation on human health and the environment.

26. Belarus officially declared that it was ready to completely discharge its functions as a fully fledged member of the Scientific Committee and that it was determined to make a unique and constructive contribution to help UNSCEAR implement its mandate. In that regard, Belarus counted on the General Assembly to consider the issue of expanding its membership in the near future.

27. **Mr. Requeijo Gual** (Cuba) said that the annual report of the Scientific Committee contained very valuable information on ionizing radiation sources and their effects on human beings and the environment. The scientific level of its reports had been high, which had enabled them to be used as background documentation for the adoption of national and international policies to protect populations against the effects of ionizing radiation. In that regard, the delegation of Cuba reaffirmed the importance that it attached to the work of the Scientific Committee, which it viewed as a source of specialized, objective and balanced information on matters within its competence.

28. The report under consideration contained a comprehensive review of the risks faced by the descendants of those who had been exposed to ionizing radiation and provided the means to take preventive actions to diminish the impact of diseases caused by inherited and environmental factors.

29. He hoped for a prompt resolution of its budget crisis so that the Scientific Committee might continue to carry out its important mandate and stressed the importance of continuing to strengthen cooperation between UNSCEAR and various United Nations agencies and institutions. Such collaboration should greatly benefit humanity through implementing technological developments in various spheres of activity, especially in health and environmental protection. Only broad and serious cooperation on the peaceful uses of atomic energy could eliminate the potential dangers of ionizing radiation.

Other matters

30. **The Chairman** said that the National Film Board of Canada had requested permission to film the proceedings of the Fourth Committee during its consideration of peacekeeping issues.

31. **Mr. Osei** (Ghana) said that his delegation did not object if the filming would be in keeping with the rules and practices adopted by the United Nations.

32. **The Chairman** said that, if there were no other remarks, he took it that the Committee wished to approve the request.

33. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.